

William Preston to George Washington, January 31, 1775, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.

FROM COLONEL WILLIAM PRESTON.

FINCASTLE Jany. 31st. 1775

DR. SIR

I wrote to you some days ago inclosing a Certificate of your Survey at the Mouth of Cole River & intended to have sent the Letter by Colo. Fleming, but meeting with Capt. Meredith who intends to Town in a few Days I got the favour of him to be the Bearer.

Capt. Floyd came here last night & has drawn up his charge which with my Account, I have (at your Request) inclosed. The money may be paid to Mr. Trigg a Member for this County whose rect. shall be good against Mr. Floyd & Myself.

I make no doubt but Col Lewis has informed you of a large Purchase made by one Colo. Henderson of North Carolina from the Cherokees.¹ Since I wrote to Colo. Lewis on this Subject I hear that Henderson talks with great Freedom & Indecency of the Governor of Virginia, Sets the Government at Defiance & says if he h once had five hundred good Fellows Settled in that Country he would not Value Virginia, that the Officers & Soldiers Who have Lands Surveyed there must h hold under him otherwise they shall not enjoy an Inch there. This & such like Stuff has a great Effect upon ignorant People & will be a Means to induce great Numbers to settle in that Country next Spring.

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There is now at Wautag [mutilated] eighty Indians & upwards of 700 more are expected to the Treaty whi [mutilated] to be held there some time next Month in order to receive the Goods which now amount to eight waggon loads & to Confirm the Sale by Conveying the Land.²

This in my Opinion will soon become a Serious Affair, & highly deserves the Attention of the Government. For it is certain that a vast Number of People are preparing to go out and Settle on this Purchase; and if once they get fixed there, it will be next to impossible to remove them or reduce them to Obedience; as they are so far from the Seat of Government. Indeed it may be the Cherokees will support them.

I am most respectfully Sir your very hble Servt: WM. PRESTON

1 Richard Henderson, of Granville County, N. C., early in 1775, formed a company, designated as the Transylvania Company, to purchase from the Cherokees all their land lying south of the Kentucky River, embracing a large portion of the present States of Kentucky and Tennessee. Governor Martin and Lord Dunmore took immediate action to declare this purchase illegal under the Royal Proclamation of 1763, and directed that if Henderson, or any member of his company, attempted to take possession of these lands, they were to be seized, and fined or imprisoned. In spite of all opposition, however, the Transylvania Company took active steps to improve and settle the country purchased. Daniel Boone was employed to survey it and construct a fort, called by Colonel Henderson Fort Boone, of which he took possession April 20, 1775. On the 23d of the same month, fifty-four town lots were drawn for by lottery, and the town of Henderson, afterwards Boonsborough, Madison County, Ky., was thus begun. Henderson addressed a memorial to the Continental Congress in 1775, petitioning that Transylvania might be added to the United Colonies. For Henderson's Proposals, and the proclamations of Governors Martin and Dunmore, see North Carolina Colonial Records, vol. ix. pp. 1122, 1129, and 1169.

2 The Transylvania purchase was concluded at the Sycamore Shoals Treaty, held on the Watauga River, March 27, 1775.